



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Agricultural
Marketing
Service

STOP 0201 -- Room 3071-S
1400 Independence Avenue, SW.
Washington, D.C. 20250-0201

July 5, 2002

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senate
433 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-4502

Dear Senator Leahy:

Thank you for your letter of June 11, 2002, co-signed by your colleagues addressed to Secretary Veneman on the National Organic Program. The Secretary has asked me to respond to your letter.

On behalf of the Secretary, let me first say thank you for the kind words of appreciation for our endeavors to implement the National Organic Program by October. Like you, we too look forward to the tremendous opportunities this program will create for the Nation's organic producers, as well as the consumers who have expressed an overwhelming desire for organic products in the marketplace.

I also want to take this opportunity to assure you and your colleagues that we do not consider the organic feed standards to be a barrier to entry into organic livestock production. The Department of Agriculture (USDA) has no intention of relaxing the organic feed requirement through rulemaking or any other actions.

Regarding the report language in the Farm Bill, I would also like to take this opportunity to tell you that we have already begun to work on this issue. The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has contracted with Iowa State University to survey grain producers and dealers in Midwestern States to ascertain planting and harvesting intentions for the years 2002-2004. Results of that study will be forthcoming this summer. This information should encourage more livestock producers to consider organic production, which will boost organic supplies of meat available to consumers.

Thanks to the efforts of Congress, USDA, and a strong voice from organic producers and consumers, the United States enjoys the most comprehensive national organic standards in the world. The unprecedented and unexpected growth in this industry is undeniably a result of the hard work that generated the national organic standards. We look forward to continued growth after implementation this fall.

Thank you again for your letter, and the opportunity to address your concerns. A similar letter is being sent to your colleagues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. J. Nates". The signature is stylized and fluid.

A. J. Nates
Administrator